

Date: October 3, 2014

To: Authorized Representatives of School Food Authorities Participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs

From: Jessica Sharkus, RDN, CD, Director – School Nutrition Team

Subject: Verification of Eligibility for the National School Lunch Program

**Please forward this time sensitive material to the designated
Verifying Official for the School Food Authority (SFA)**

To maintain the integrity of the USDA Child Nutrition Programs, each SFA must annually verify eligibility of children from a sample of household applications approved for free and reduced price meal benefits for that school year. Verification is only required to confirm eligibility determined through the application process, not through direct certification. Verification must include either confirmation of income eligibility or confirmation that the child is a member of a household receiving assistance under FoodShare, W-2 cash benefits, or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR). Verification may include confirmation of any other information required on the application.

To determine which applications are selected for verification, there are three methods established by USDA. All SFAs must use the Standard Sampling Method unless it qualifies to use an alternative sample size method. Based on the results of the Verification Collection Report (VCR) submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) in the 2013-14 school year (SY) your SFA is approved to choose any of the three (3) sampling methods including: Standard Sampling Method, Alternate One, or Alternate Two.

- **Standard:** Verify 3% or 3,000 of approved applications, whichever is less, selected from error prone applications on file as of October 1. If there are not enough error prone applications, SFAs must select at random additional applications to complete sample size.
- **Alternate One:** Verify 3% or 3,000, whichever is less, of all randomly selected approved applications on file as of October 1.
- **Alternate Two:** Verify the lesser of 1% or 1,000 approved applications as of October 1 selected from error prone applications PLUS the lesser of one-half of one percent or 500 applications approved as of October 1 that provided a case number in lieu of income.

Please refer to pages 84-85 in the 2014 *Eligibility Manual for School Meals* (EM) for more information on these methods.

The verification process must be completed by November 15, 2014. The outcome and results of verification are reported annually to DPI utilizing the online VCR and are due by February 1, 2015.

There are many resources and training materials to assist you with verification. These resources and materials can be found on the DPI School Nutrition Team (SNT) website at http://fns.dpi.wi.gov/fns_fincoul#verification or go to the “Index” and click on “V” for verification to locate these resources. Resources available on our website include verification forms and letter templates, webcasts, instructions for completing the VCR, a link to the updated EM, and a sample of the VCR to print and fill out manually prior to completing online.

Enclosed you will find a copy of the instructions for completing the VCR, which have been updated for the 2014-15 SY and includes clarifications and information regarding the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

If your SFA is not able to complete the verification process by November 15, you may request an extension by logging into the VCR site, click on the “Request Waiver” tab and complete the requested information. DPI may approve an extension up to December 15 of the current school year. An extension request beyond December 15 must be approved by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Midwest Regional Office. Extensions will be granted **only for valid reasons** such as natural disaster, civil disorder, strike, or other circumstances that prevent the SFA from timely completion of verification activities.

SFAs participating in CEP

If your entire SFA participates in CEP, you do not need to complete the verification process; however, the VCR is still required to be completed and submitted by February 1, 2015. Please refer to the enclosed VCR instructions to complete for CEP only.

If only some schools within your SFA participate in CEP, only the non-CEP schools are included in the verification process. Please remember, if you are using the alternate Household Income Form, verification is only for the USDA Free and Reduced Price School Meal Applications. The outcome of verification is to be reported as usual for these schools and CEP schools will be reported in section 2 on the VCR. Please refer to the enclosed VCR instructions.

Please contact any consultant if you have questions (<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/fns/directory.html>).

Important Dates to Remember

1. The sample size determined for verification is based on the number of current applications on file as of **October 1, 2014**. Carryover applications from the 2013-2014 SY are excluded.
2. The verification process must be completed by **November 15, 2014**.
3. SFAs may begin to report the outcome of verification in the VCR beginning **November 1, 2014**. The portal for the report is located on the online services page of the SNT website at http://fns.dpi.wi.gov/fns_online.
4. When completing the VCR, the total number of enrolled students is as of **October 31, 2014**.
5. The VCR must be submitted online no later than **February 1, 2015**.